

VZCZCXRO9830
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHYD #1227 3531629
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181629Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9517
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE 0263
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0422
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS YAOUNDE 001227

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MARR MASS PHUM KPKO KWMN KTIP AORC PREL CM
SUBJECT: ACOTA SCORES WIN-WIN WITH CAMEROON TRAINING

¶1. (U) This cable is supplemented by photographs and other records of the event available on Yaounde's unclassified website at http://yaounde.usembassy.gov/ln_121209.html

¶2. (U) Summary: A Cameroonian battalion of 600 soldiers has completed ACOTA training in preparation for an eventual peacekeeping mission, a first for Cameroon and a long-awaited milestone for USG objectives to foster Cameroon's greater engagement in regional conflict resolution. Our attention now turns to matching Cameroon with a UN mission. End summary.

¶3. (U) Ambassador, Defense Attache, Poloff and Public Affairs Officer travelled to the northern town of Ngaoundere to attend the December 12 ceremony marking the end of eight weeks of ACOTA training. The Government of Cameroon (GRC) was represented by Secretary of State for Defense Jean Baptiste Bokam, a civilian official subordinate to the Minister of Defense, and a slew of senior military officials, including the Chief of Staff of the Army. Bokam was evidently impressed by the results of the training ("they look like real soldiers!" he exclaimed) and said his report to President Biya would convey the effectiveness of the training.

¶4. (SBU) The ACOTA trainers-- a dozen contractors from MPRI supported by a team of marines from the Marine Corps Training Advisory Group--worked with 600 Cameroonian soldiers to develop the skills most important to peacekeeping missions. The training included basic military tradecraft like weapons handling, establishing checkpoints, management of the area of responsibility, and responding to attacks on aid convoys and sessions on respect for human rights, combating the sex trade and human trafficking. For example, the battalion commander who briefed the Ambassador and Bokam took special pride in reporting that the Cameroonian soldiers now understood the significance of rules of engagement in a peacekeeping context.

¶5. (SBU) Simultaneous to the battalion-wide training, the ACOTA module "trained the trainers," a Cameroonian peacekeeping training unit who will be permanently assigned to Cameroon's new peacekeeping training center at Ngaoundere, which is expected to be finalized in an forthcoming presidential decree, to provide training to future peacekeeping battalions. The civilian and military ACOTA trainers reported that their Cameroonian counterparts were eager and competent participants in the training, anecdotally placing Cameroon's participation as above average (but not the best) among the ACOTA countries where they had worked before. The participants in the ACOTA training were pulled from Cameroon's four armed services and from locations around the country. If Cameroon signs up for a specific peacekeeping mission, the ACOTA trainers will return, to provide refresher training and additional training tailored to the specific mission the battalion will carry out.

¶6. (SBU) Comment. The formation of an ACOTA-trained battalion is a significant achievement for USG objectives in Cameroon, moving Cameroon one step closer to contributing to an international peacekeeping mission and enhancing the professionalism of Cameroon's armed forces. Senior Cameroonian military officials at the event confirmed privately to DAO our belief that, for reasons of

personality and bureaucracy, Biya will not simply volunteer Cameroon for a peacekeeping mission, but will likely accept if asked by the United Nations to participate in a mission close to Cameroon's interests, like Congo or the Central African Republic. Post will work with the Department and USUN to coordinate an approach most likely to succeed. End comment.